



TARGET ACCESS

Interpreting Services Program Continues Rapid Growth



202-720-3515 (voice)
202-690-6021 (tty)

TARGET Access

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In 1992, Susie Prior began interpreting events and meetings in sign language for USDA employees who were deaf or hard-of-hearing. At the time, she was the only interpreter, shuttling between various DC locations every day. Today, along with Lynette Spriggs, Susie coordinates interpreting services for USDA employees and events, which can utilize up to 20 interpreters a day in headquarters buildings alone.

Both the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) helped make people aware of the need to provide accessible information and

communication to employees. The USDA was also hiring more employees with disabilities. "As the number of deaf and hard of hearing employees increased in the USDA, so did the need for additional interpreters," Ms. Prior said.

As a result, the USDA created the Interpreting Services Program and Susie became the Program Manager. Initially, to increase the availability of interpreting services for the USDA, a second interpreter was added to the program, allowing Susie to focus on education and awareness. However, the demand for services continued to grow, and Interpreting

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Interpreting Services continued...

Services began the current process of contracting interpreters. Today, Interpreting Services utilizes eleven interpreting agencies in the DC area. "We've come a long way from one interpreter running around all the buildings," says Ms. Prior.

In 1997, Lynette Spriggs joined the Interpreting Services Program. Lynette assists with the scheduling of interpreters for USDA employees throughout the United States. "I really enjoy meeting the employees who are deaf; I've even learned a little sign language myself," said Ms. Spriggs. Most importantly, Ms. Prior is now freed up to do a lot more education and awareness for the program. According to Ms. Prior, "I do a lot less interpreting today than I did 11 years ago. Lynette has really helped me deal with the increasing number of requests and get what I need to get done."

The Interpreting Services Office joined the USDA TARGET Center in 2001, corresponding well with the TARGET Center's mission to assess, educate, and advocate for the integration of assistive technology and worksite accommodations. "As the TARGET Center was becoming increasingly known for its services for employees with disabilities," said Ms. Prior, "the union only made sense."

The Interpreting Services Office provides services in sign language in a variety of modes (American Sign Language, PSE, Oral, English) and also provides note takers and captionists who use a variety of technologies. These services, which are available for USDA employees and visitors, are provided for Department or agency events, staff meetings, one-on-one meetings with co-workers, training, office social events or any other situation which requires communication among employees. *For more information, visit Interpreting Services on the web at www.usda.gov/oo/target/pops/interpreting.htm.*

TARGET Learns from RESNA

In June, TARGET Staff member David Kay attended the annual RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology Society of North America) conference in Orlando, Florida. RESNA sponsored a five-day event that included instructional courses, workshops and exhibits. Topics covered included a refresher on principles of Job Accommodation, an update for Web Accessibility, and an instructional course on accessibility enhancements for Microsoft Office programs.

The seminar that most impressed David provided instruction in customizing Microsoft Word. Software customization tends to be one of the least used forms of assistive technology for computer users with disabilities. Users of alternative input devices, individuals with low vision, or those who simply benefit from having fewer required keystrokes are just a few examples of the applicability.

"Learning to creatively use the Auto Correct feature and the introduction to Visual Basic has empowered me with some great new skills," said Mr. Kay. "While sitting through the course I was immediately thinking of clients who could benefit from the customizations. For example, I had a particular person in mind when I deciphered how to write a script that would allow a user to toggle through the zoom features by pressing the F10 key."

USDA TARGET Center staff members continually make an effort to stay up to date and educated in the field of assistive technology. As Mr. Kay puts it, "There is no way to intuitively know everything there is to know about assistive technology, which is why it is so important for us to continue our education in the field." This education extends to TARGET clients as well; David intends to add the Microsoft Word customization techniques to TARGET's Customizing Your PC class.

For more information on RESNA, visit www.resna.org.

TARGET FOCUS



Handheld PC's for People Who are Blind

When the first personal digital assistants (PDAs) became popular, they were basically electronic versions of day planners. As the functionality of these devices improved, they became more and more like handheld PC's. Consequently, several companies developed similar devices for users who are blind. These include the Braille Note, the Braille Lite, and the Pronto. However, these devices were designed to be used primarily for notetaking purposes. Only recently has a company developed an equivalent to the handheld PC for users in the blind community.

That company, Freedom Scientific, has now released the 2nd version of its PAC Mate personal digital assistant, the only accessible Pocket PC device that now offers users an integrated Braille option.

According to accessibility.net, the PAC Mate is "the ultimate laptop replacement. Freedom Scientific's PAC Mate provides access to everyday Windows-based desktop data and software applications via Microsoft(r) Pocket PC. By utilizing JAWS(r) for the Braille and speech output, the eight-dot keyboard in the BNS model offers the greatest solution. If you prefer a QWERTY-style keyboard, then you will find the PAC Mate TNS your solution."

Why use a PAC Mate instead of a laptop? The advantages are similar to those mentioned for PDAs

for the sighted user. The PAC Mate, in fact, functions much like a PDA, and could improve the portability of technology for blind employees. The Pocket PC platform on the PAC Mate is virtually identical to the operating system on handheld PC's like Hewlett Packard's Ipaq. Users who are blind simply use built-in screen reader software to navigate through the various menus and programs.

For a limited time, the USDA TARGET Center has a braille input PAC Mate BX400 available for loan. TARGET will receive a QWERTY input demonstration unit for loan purposes in the near future. Additionally, TARGET has a display-only unit of the QX400, as well as interchangeable demo shells of the 20-cell and 40-cell portable Braille displays. TARGET has also learned that the PAC Mate is covered for employees with a qualified disability through the USDA/CAP Partnership. Please contact the TARGET Center for more information on CAP's qualifications in regards to the PAC Mate. TARGET staff has scheduled an instructional session with Freedom Scientific representatives that is aimed at increasing our ability to support users. If you would like more information on the PAC Mate, or would like to request a loan or a demo, please contact the TARGET Center.

OPEDA & Accessibility

The Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) is leading the way for USDA organizations by making sure that OPEDA materials are accessible to all USDA employees. OPEDA keeps its members informed through a monthly newsletter, alert mailings, brochures, flyers, and e-mail. TARGET would like to commend OPEDA on a job well done in making alternative formats readily available.

OPEDA is an association of professional employees with the mission of enhancing the effectiveness of members in the performance of their duties.

- OPEDA's Goals -

- Professionalism in delivery of quality public service.
- Opportunities for career growth and professional development for each employee through training, education and service.
- Equal rights and opportunities for all employees.
- Recognition of federal employee performance and public service achievements.
- Safe and harmonious work environment for all employees.
- Supervision and management which is sensitive to employee concerns.
- Equitable economic benefits for employees and retirees.

www.usda.gov/opeda

USDA TARGET Center Calendar of Events

- **July 14th and August 11th , 12 pm - 1 pm**
Making Accessible PDFs
Location: USDA TARGET Center
- **July 15th, 10 am - 3 pm**
1st Annual USDA APHIS Ergonomics Fair
Ergonomics awareness and education
Location: 4700 Riverdale Road, Riverdale, MD
- **July 21st and August 18th, 12 pm - 1 pm**
Customizing Your PC
Location: USDA TARGET Center
- **July 22nd, 10 am - 12 pm**
Technology Demonstration:
CPC captioning, subtitling, and teleprompting
Location: USDA TARGET Center
- **July 26th, 10 am - 3 pm**
Commerce Dept. Assistive Technology Event
Location: Department of Commerce
- **August 4th, 12 pm - 1 pm**
Being Comfortable At Work
Location: USDA TARGET Center
- **August 17th - 19th, 8 am - 5 pm**
FSIS Diversity Conference
Location: Capitol Hilton

*Please visit our web site for more information
and a complete listing of disability related events.*



Helping People. It's What We Do.

USDA TARGET Center
1400 Independence Avenue Room 1006-S
Tel: 202.720.2600 (v/tty)
target-center@usda.gov www.usda.gov/oo/target